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ABSTRACT

In this monograph, common problems faced by beginning teachers are discussed. These include: (1) encountering the unexpected demands of teaching in the familiar framework of the classroom; (2) understanding the role of the teacher in dealing with students; (3) communicating effectively with parents; (4) achieving a clear perspective on the authority and responsibilies of the principal; (5) establishing a sound rapport with other teachers; and (6) applying instructional skills to a specific curriculum. Suggestions are made on what the new teacher can do when faced with these problems, how the school can provide support for the new teacher, and what teacher education institutions can do to prepare students for the first year of teaching. (JD)

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The Induction of New Teachers

Kevin Ryan

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The Induction of New Teachers

by
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The chapter sponsors this fastback to honor Rayalene Brizendine in recognition of her service and leadership to Phi Delta Kappa. While serving as historian, president-elect, president, past president, and chairperson of the Diamond Jubilee celebration, she accomplished many worthwhile activities for the chapter. She currently serves as vice president for membership and has created a computerized membership database.

In addition to her service to her local chapter, she has been a leader at district and national levels. In sponsoring this fastback in her honor, the Ohio State University Chapter pays tribute to an exemplary member of our professional organization.

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Introduction

As children try to squeeze the last few drops of freedom from their summer vacation, their teachers already are preparing for the new school year. One of the rituals of those pre-opening days is the introduction of new teachers. These strangers to the school are briefly introduced and are asked to stand and be applauded by their senior colleagues. They then disappear into their new classrooms to engage in what for many is the major struggle of their lives, the struggle to master their chosen profession.

The plight of new teachers does not receive a great deal of attention from the media. Compared with world hunger, terrorism, or pollution, it seems minor. After all, everyone starting a new job has difficulties. The new accountant has to struggle with new procedures and a new organizational structure. The new salesman has to learn the product line and scramble to find customers. The loneliness and frustrations of starting a new job just come with the territory. So what is unique about the plight of the new teacher?

The difficulties experienced by beginning teachers have consequences, not for sales quotas, but for children. A first-grader does not learn to read and begins to fall behind. A seventh-grader has trouble with his teachers and begins to give up. A high school student wants to pursue a career in science but is frustrated by the shortcomings of the new calculus teacher. Students are the primary victims when beginning teachers fail.

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There is another, more hidden cost to this problem. This is the change in attitude toward teaching that results from a troubled first year. A good insight into this issue comes from examination of the Minnesota Teacher Attitude Inventory (MTAI), an instrument that has been used for many years to measure the attitudes of teachers toward teaching and students. Data from the large-scale use of this instrument reveal the following pattern: Throughout preservice preparation and during student teaching, attitudes toward teaching continue to rise. Positive attitudes peak in the early weeks of the first year of teaching then fall dramatically during the first four or five months of that initial year. At that point a slow but gradual rise in attitudes toward teaching begins, but those attitudes never again become as positive as they were. This phenomenon is aptly called "the curve of disenchantment." For many teachers this disenchantment leads to negative attitudes toward children: "How can you teach kids who don't care!" or, "My class is so poorly prepared I can't do anything with them." It also leads to a discouraged, sour attitude toward teaching. "It's me against them!"

This disenchantment may be the direct cause of the instability in the profession. Teaching increasingly is becoming a short-term career, with the average teacher leaving the profession in less than 10 years. Teachers who have unsuccessful and unpleasant early experiences do not make strong commitments and often begin to look for ways to escape from teaching.

The problems of the new teacher also are experienced by many teachers who have changed schools or grade levels. It is not uncommon for a teacher who was highly effective in one community to move to another and find herself thrashing around like a raw beginner. New kinds of students, new policies and procedures, and a new curriculum sometimes can cause experienced teachers to seemingly lose their carefully acquired professional competence. And while the adjustment period may not be as long or as dramatic for the experienced "new" teacher, it is still disorienting and can be severe.

The problems of new teachers affect not only the students and the teachers themselves but also the administrators in the school. Grade-level or department chairpersons must deal with a variety of prob-

lems when the first-year teacher has difficulty. The teacher's morale is low. The classes appear to be in disarray or apathetic. Parents bring troubling reports. On top of the chairperson's own teaching demands and organizational and administrative duties, they also must spend long hours trying to solve a complicated and involved personnel crisis.

New teachers can cause special problems for the principal, involving extensive supervision to see if the problem is one that can be solved through coaching or whether the only solution is terminating the new teacher's contract.

Teacher education and professional associations also have a stake in the professional performance of new teachers. The failures of the new teacher call into question the effectiveness of their preparation at teacher education institutions. Professional associations, while concerned with the general welfare of all teachers, have a special responsibility for the successful transition of new teachers into the profession.

However, the problems of new teachers are not insolvable. There are things that can be done to reduce greatly the entry trauma of the new teacher. The profession has learned much about these problems, and steps are being taken in schools across the nation to make the newcomer's transition into teaching a much more satisfying and productive one.

The Survival Stage

I remember well my own preservice preparation when one of my professors described the responsibilities of the new teacher. He waxed eloquently about the public trust we were soon to assume. He spoke about the power of a teacher to do good or harm to the children. And then, pausing dramatically, he said, "And while we are going to put great responsibility in your young hands on the first day of your teaching career, we do not increase it. You will have exactly the same responsibility after 40 years of teaching." I was left with the impression that I was taking on a career where the work did not vary, where the experience of being a teacher was static. Years later, a similar view was expressed by Dan C. Lortie in his book *School Teacher* in which he speaks of teaching as an "unstaged career." Yet as I matured as a teacher, I came to realize that while teaching may be unstaged in some organizational sense, the psychological reality of teaching is very different from one period in a career to the next.

The late Frances Fuller developed a theory of teacher concerns that states that teachers go through three stages once they begin teaching. If we include their preparation and student teaching, there would be four stages. The first might be called the "fantasy" stage, followed by the "survival" stage, then the "mastery" stage, and finally the "impact" stage. It is the first two stages that concern the beginning teacher.

The fantasy stage begins when the person starts to think seriously about becoming a teacher. Most preservice teachers fantasize about

what their life as a teacher will be like. Following are some typical fantasies written by preservice students:

> I will be very mature and loving. The students will respect me for how hard I work. I will have such respect that I never have to raise my voice. No one will want to misbehave, afraid of losing my favor.

> I'm not going to be like the teachers I knew. I'm not going to be aloof and different. I'm going to be known as the teacher who cared. And not just for the bright kids, the easy kids. I'm going to give special care to the losers, the kids whom everyone else has given up on. It won't be easy, but it will be rewarding in special ways.

As preservice teachers get closer to entering their own classrooms, the fantasies often change character. Dark fantasies or bad dreams come more often. Frequently preservice teachers will feel anxious about their future career even though they continue to have pleasant fantasies about their future. Following are two typical dark fantasies of preservice teachers:

> I'm in a classroom that is obviously mine, but I feel very uneasy. I have this sense of something about to go vrong, but I keep plowing ahead. All of a sudden this kid, who is much bigger than the others, yells out "The Word" at me. Caught off guard, I say, "What did you say?" in my sternest voice. He smiles at me evilly and says it again, but louder. Then I wake up in a panic.

> I'm teaching my favorite subject, the thing I really know best; and everything is going just fine. I have just finished explaining the key idea, and I notice that most of the students look puzzled. I ask them if they understand, and they just look at me dumbly. I start to speak louder and repeat myself, but no one seems to understand me. Then the students start to cry!

Whether the fantasies are pleasant or anxious, preservice teachers often do not think about their future career in a careful, analytical manner. One reason why preservice teachers find education courses irrelevant is that these courses have little to do with what is going on in their fantasy lives. Bloom's taxonomy of educational objectives

has little meaning to undergraduates wrapped up in fantasies about whether the students will like them.

The fantasy stage is interrupted by student teaching, which typically comes in the undergraduate's final year; but it does not end. While student teaching is intended to allow the student teacher to experience actual teaching, the student teacher does not have the full responsibilities of teaching. For all the challenge of having to prepare and teach lessons and to evaluate one's results with real (as opposed to textbook) students, it is not the same as being the teacher who receives a salary to discharge certain professional responsibilities. There is much benefit in student teaching, in the opportunity to act like a teacher and to try out skills and ideas; but it is different from actual teaching in some fundamental ways. Preservice students who are not aware of these differences may have trouble when they start their first teaching job.

One important difference is in the control of a classroom. While it may appear as if the student teacher is in charge of the room, the students know that control actually rests with the supervising teacher. If the students are uncooperative with the student teacher or cause some sort of commotion, they will be disciplined by their "real" teacher.

Student teaching is a reality test, but it is a sheltered reality. The student teacher enters a classroom culture that the regular teacher worked to establish at the beginning of the year. When the student teacher comes on the scene, the patterns and mores are established. Students know what they are supposed to do and how they are supposed to do it. The hard work of establishing a classroom culture already has been done; and whether student teachers know it or not, they simply are maintaining the systems already established. While this is no mean feat, the student teacher is simply not the teacher.

However, fantasies are not over. The time between student teaching and getting that first job is a time of intense fantasizing. Although the fantasies now are based on their classroom experiences as student teachers, future teachers still devote considerable time to "What will it be like?" and "What will I do when this or that happens?" Even when they have a specific job in a specific school, and during the

excitement of the pre-opening day teachers' meetings, beginning teachers fantasize about what might happen to them. But once their students show up for their first class, all this is brushed aside. Reality has finally arrived. Or has it?

Most beginning teachers find the initial weeks of school exciting, exhausting, and completely involving. They learn an enormous amount in a short period of time. Many of their pet theories about education are quickly dispelled. They find that they are continually revising and adjusting work plans. But behind all the activity is a sense of deep satisfaction.

> It is working! My dreams are coming true. I found a teaching job and it is going well. Not perfectly, but well. I say things and they listen. I tell them to do things and they do them. I assign homework and it gets done. I ask them to stop talking or to lower their voices and they actually do it. Or at least most of them usually do it. I feel like I am becoming an adult, like I am taking my place in society. And after all the schooling and all the worries and dreaming, it feels good.

For some beginning teachers there will be no dramatic changes after their first months. The thrill of having students respond to them gradually wears off. They learn to plan more realistically and with less effort. Small problems related to such areas as evaluation of instruction are encountered but overcome. Some moments are better than others; but by and large, the first year is a year of gradually gaining more competence and confidence, of growing in professional skills and in professional commitment. These teachers are the lucky minority.

Most beginning teachers go into the survival stage during the first year. It is called the survival stage because the new teacher is fighting for his or her professional life, and often for a sense of worth and identity as well. For most beginning teachers the survival stage is the biggest challenge of their lives. If their class is not learning or is misbehaving, new teachers perceive this as a personal failure. The teachers in the rooms to the right and to the left of them are managing. The teachers who have had these students in other years

or other classes have succeeded (or so it seems), but the new teacher is not.

Their failure is also public. The students know something is wrong, that things are not as they should be. Surely the parents are becoming aware. Depending on the nature of the difficulties, the teachers to the right and left know of the new teacher's failure. The principal also soon will know. The failure of a first-year teacher is no dirty little secret; it happens before a very public audience.

The timing and the intensity of first-year teachers' survival stage vary immensely. Intensity is a personal matter. For one teacher a particular incident with a student might be shattering, while for another it is simply one glancing blow among many. But there is some consistency among first-year teachers in the timing of the onset of the survival stage. The research on the MTAI suggests that the arrival of the curve of disenchantment, which parallels the survival stage, occurs in the fall between the first of October and the Christmas break. However, it can start on the first day or the final week of school. It can last eight hours or eight months. The crisis can occur once or be a series of seeming disasters. The more typical pattern is for teachers to be lulled into complacency by what they perceive as early successes and then to work themselves into difficulties during one of the early months of the school year.

Usually the survival stage is over by February; and the teacher passes into the mastery of craft stage, where the new teacher begins to learn the craft of teaching in a step-by-step fashion.

The survival stage can have far-reaching and complex effects depending on the individual teacher. It can affect the way in which the teacher will view teaching in the future. Students also may suffer because of the way in which the teacher manages this stage. The teaching profession may suffer because of weakened commitments and truncated careers.

However, there is a certain beauty in the beginning teacher's struggle in the survival stage. For many of these young people, the survival stage is their first great confrontation. They are confronted with a problem that they cannot ignore nor blame on someone else. No one else can solve these problems for the beginning teacher. The begin-

ning teacher can flee from this problem and leave teaching to try some other career. Or the beginning teacher can work out the problem. At a certain point the new teacher must confront the problem and struggle to succeed.

What makes the struggle difficult is that it can have many causes and combinations of causes. In the next chapter we will consider six categories of problems common to first-year teachers.

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Common Problems of Beginning Teachers

The six most common problems that face first-year teachers are the shock of the familiar, students, parents, administrators, fellow teachers, and instruction. These six categories of problems were selected because they are a straightforward, somewhat obvious set. And although they are described separately, it should be understood that often these problems act in combination. For example, the teacher's poor instruction causes the children to get restless and to start testing the teacher's authority. The poor classroom management that results comes to the attention of the principal, whose investigation begins to erode the teacher's confidence. Sometimes these interacting problems get completely out of control, with one difficulty leading to another in a downward spiral. Before long the situation has completely deteriorated. However, while problems tend to overlap and interact, most first-year teachers are able to isolate the trouble spots and search for solutions.

The Shock of the Familiar

New teachers often feel like strangers in a familiar setting. Teachers are on familiar turf compared to people beginning most other occupations. The inside of a factory with its noise and activity is usually new to the neophyte assembly-line worker. The courtroom and judge's

chambers are not well-known arenas for the young lawyer. New teachers, on the other hand, have spent a great portion of their lives in classrooms, often more than they have spent in any activity except sleeping and watching television. Not counting college or university courses, the new teacher has logged somewhere between sixteen and eighteen thousand hours in classrooms before taking over a class. The average teacher has had, including higher education, about 60 teachers from whom admirable behaviors, skills, and attitudes can be selected and imitated. As a result of all this observation and exposure to models, teachers have a large storehouse of images of school life. They know the smells and the noises of the classroom. The world of chalkdust, construction paper, detention slips, and report cards is home to them. Then why and by what are they shocked?

> For the last hour of the school day, I drag myself around. I can hardly be civil to the students by the end of the day. Sometimes I have a headache and sometimes it is sheer exhaustion. And often both. The noise and crowds and the sheer volume of the activity of school really seem to overpower me. It is not exactly a surprise, because I was a student myself; but I never realized the strain involved in having to manage all that activity, all that raw energy. I leave school every day and drive home and crawl into my apartment. All I can think of doing is sleeping. I promise myself I'll only take a nap, but I don't wake up until ten. Then it's a quick TV dinner and lesson plans until the early hours. I don't know how long I can keep this up!

Besides the unexpected demands on an individual's stamina, there are other surprises, such as paperwork. The needs of the principal's office for information on student tardiness, attendance, innoculation history, locker numbers and combinations, schedules (Didn't their schedules come from the office?), parents' home and work addresses, and whom to call in case of a medical emergency, seems insatiable to the new teacher.

> I spent all those years planning and preparing to be a teacher and I have ended up a clerk! In three months no one has asked how I'm doing, or told me that I was doing a good job, or said anything to me about education. But I get regular complaints from the office about

how my tardy slips are tardy and how my attendance records are poorly filled out. I am so frustrated that if I could possibly hire a secretary, I would!

Then there are the parts of the job the teachers never anticipated, which were never covered in their academic preparation. When beginning teachers are confronted with these unexpected aspects of the job, they are unprepared and disoriented.

> Some of the kids want a mother more than a teacher. But I can't blame them after listening to some of their stories of what passes for their home lives. But I really don't want to get involved in all that. I'm not a counselor. I want to teach! I'm barely holding myself together these days without becoming a social worker.

Teaching can be a deceiving occupation. Being on the teacher's side of the desk is an entirely new and different experience than being a student watching teachers. Often what looked to be easy turns out to be beyond the beginning teacher's capacities.

Students

Most young people do not become teachers for prestige or financial benefits, nor even out of burning desire to teach a discipline or certain ideas. They teach because they are concerned for children and desire to be an effective force in the life of the young. Therefore it is particularly painful and discouraging when new teachers realize that students are the major source of their distress.

Studies regularly confirm that new teachers' relationships with students are the source of most of their problems. For discussion purposes, I have organized the problems with students into three areas: understanding, social distance, and discipline.

Understanding Students. "There is a pocket of kids in my class that I swear come from Mars!" America is a pluralistic country, but this pluralism is only a small part of the strangeness many new teachers report.

The problem is that many teachers encounter students whose behaviors and attitudes they simply do not recognize. The students have

attitudes about school or teachers that seem totally new. They have ways of expressing themselves or, worse, not expressing themselves that puzzle teachers. While some teachers were raised in homogeneous communities where the variety of people they associated with was limited, many attended comprehensive public high schools with a broad mix of students. Yet now they find strangeness in their mainline public school classroom. The most plausible explanation is that, as students, these new teachers never paid attention to these types of students. Some teachers who shunned sports in school never really encountered the world of varsity athletes. Others who were very involved in sports were attracted to teaching because of this interest in athletics and have a hard time understanding the more bookish students. And most new teachers have difficulty with those students who place little importance in school, for whom school is an inconvenience. Students with these attitudes were surely there when the new teachers were students themselves, but they were simply students who drifted in and out of school, often working hard not to be seen or known. Now, as teachers, they must deal with these students.

> Maybe there were kids like this when I was in school, but I just don't think so. They exist in their own little world, and I can't get to it. They are as lively and active as wallpaper. And it is as if school doesn't touch them in any way. They are a strange group. What am I supposed to do with them?

Social Distance. Some new teachers consciously work to be different from teachers they knew who were too remote from the lives of students. These new teachers want a more intimate environment in their own classrooms. They want to eliminate what they see as the "phony barriers between people." Therefore they work hard to get close to their students. They dress youthfully; they use slang from the youth culture; they know what is going on in the pop culture and talk about it with students. They may even have the students call them by their first names. Often this desire to be close to students comes from the best of intentions, but also it often comes from insecurity and the desire to be liked. In any event, it confuses students who do not want the new teacher to be a friend but simply an effective teacher. The

students' reactions to this over-familiarity often lead to discipline problems.

Discipline. Discipline problems to the new teacher are like skin problems to the adolescent. Few get through the period unblemished. The problems come in many forms and occur at all grade levels, but the basic phenomenon is the same: the teacher does not have control of some or all of the class. A basic fact about teaching is that the teacher has responsibility for a group of children for part of the day. They have formal authority in their class and they have to exercise that authority. While some teachers can maintain control even while they are out of the classroom, others cannot maintain it even by yelling at the top of their lungs. Some teachers seem to be comfortable with their authority from the beginning; others wear it like someone else's suit. Learning to be comfortable with one's authority and to exercise it humanely is one of the major tasks of the first-year teacher.

Part of first-year teachers' problems is their view of students. If they have a highly romantic view of children and believe that any misbehavior is a result of faulty parenting or earlier deprivation, then it is difficult to hold the student accountable. Unfortunately, this romantic view is quite prevalent in much writing on education where preservice teachers read that "All failures are the school's failures," or "All misbehavior has its origin in the teacher's lack of professional skills." While there is some truth in these statements, they are misleading. New teachers need to be told the bracing news that, "Yes, Virginia, there is such a thing as a bad boy!" There are children who come to school angry, frustrated, and with a long history of no self-control. The teacher has little opportunity to redress all the lacks in a child's past and no control over a child who has hardened his heart against the school.

> I couldn't believe this girl. Sara was 10 years old and as hard as nails. She would be great, until someone crossed her. Me. Another student. Then she would just turn on us. With no regard, she would just let fly. The first few times it happened I was stunned. I had never heard or seen such hate, such anger. Although I was twice her size, I was scared to death. I just stood there like a fool. I'm sure the kids lost faith in me because of the way I acted. But just as quickly as the

storm came up, it would disappear and she would act as if nothing happened. I should have gotten help, but I was afraid somebody would think I was weak. As it turned out, I didn't fool anybody, particularly the rest of the kids who were mad that I couldn't handle Sara.

In addition to an overly romantic view of children, the new teacher's quest for approval is another source of discipline problems. Anyone starting a new job is uncertain and wants to know if he or she is doing a good job. In situations where the beginner is rarely visited by the principal or department chairman, it is to be expected that uncertainty will develop. "Am I letting too much informality develop so that they will start treating me like just another one of the kids?" "Am I being too lenient and letting a few students get away with rude behavior?" "Am I doing what is expected of me?" "Are these students really learning, or am I just going through the motions?" When teachers do not know the answers to these questions, they need answers from the outside. Otherwise, they will search for acceptance and approval from the students. Some students will sense the teacher's vulnerability in this search for approval and begin to exploit it. Students can take uncertainty for weakness and begin to challenge the teacher for control of the class.

A third problem in discipline is the new teacher's lack of skill. A new teacher may fully appreciate the need to be an authority figure and be aware of the dangers of seeking acceptance and approval from students, but lack the necessary skills to deal with misbehavior effectively. Many new teachers have had only limited experience in managing others' behavior. They do not know how to tell a child how to be quiet, especially after the child has ignored the first two requests. They see students misbehaving in the back of the room, but they do not know how to confront them. Nor do they know where to draw the line between preserving order and rigidly controlling every move.

Nothing caused me more trouble my first year than discipline. I started ignoring stuff and very quickly I was yelling at students. I went back and forth for the first month between being Mr. Nice Guy and a Hitler clone. What I ended up being was Mr. Inconsistent. Usually I waited too long, hoping that the talking would stop, that the kids

would get bored with what they were doing and start paying attention to the good stuff I had spent all the night before preparing. It rarely happened. I just didn't know how to assert myself. . . or rather assert the needs of the whole class. What a sad joke I was.

An inadequate view of human nature, a misdirected quest for approval, and lack of skills to deal with inappropriate behavior are the roots of most discipline problems. While most teachers finally become adequate disciplinarians, the road they travel is a rough and discouraging one. Whatever the causes, problems with students need much more attention from new teachers and from those who help them. When new teachers blunder, both they and their students suffer.

Parents

Teachers in training do not think about parents very much. When they do, they view them as partners, people who will be supportive of the teacher's work and respectful of their dedication to working with children and youth. Many parents are a significant source of the new teacher's satisfaction and sense of worth. The appreciation and compliments children cannot find voice to express are often transmitted by grateful parents. However, parents are a great source of discomfort for beginning teachers for a number of reasons.

In rare cases parents may be jealous and feel rejected because of the trust and affection their child places in a teacher. Occasionally, students distort what has happened in class or tell tall tales about a teacher, which can easily lead to misunderstanding. A major source of conflict between parents and new teachers is the parents' concern about the new teacher's competence. With little information, they suspect the worst.

My first Parents' Night was going quite well. I was outlining the English curriculum we were following and there was a lot of head nodding, which I took as approval. When I started talking about the writing program, a man in the back started waving his hand. As nicely as I could, I told him I would take his question in two minutes, once I finished the overview. Well, that wasn't good enough for him. He wanted to know why I don't teach grammar. I told him I did and I

would continue to; and before I explained my approach to grammar, he started in on what he called "the new no-fault grammar being peddled today" and how it was rotting students' minds. He was quite impressive, except for the rather important fact that it had nothing to do with my class. I was shocked and, I guess, a little flustered. I started to answer him, but the passing bell rang and all the parents had to go to the auditorium for the principal's yearly talk. I just stood there with egg on my face as the parents filed out of the room, no one even making eye contact with me. That was the beginning of my problems with parents. They started grumbling, but the issues were never clear. The principal, who I have always felt was on my side, said they had no confidence in me.

It is understandable that parents may be uneasy when they learn that their child has a new teacher. The fact that new teachers bring fresh energy and new ideas is often overlooked by parents who focus only on their inexperience. While inexperience is a valid issue, there is nothing the new teacher can do about it. Like adolescence, all you can do is to wait to grow out of it.

Often teachers need to confer with parents about their child's study routine or to seek the parents' support in dealing with a discipline problem, but the parents never get in touch with them. The teacher sends notes, makes phone calls to parents at home and work. Or they make elaborate preparations to confer with these parents during parent-teacher conferences or at back-to-school nights. But the parents do not respond. Of course, the parents of the teacher's high achievers are there to soak up reports of their child's latest accomplishments, as they have been doing since nursery school. But the parents the new teacher has been trying to see never show up.

It is frustrating and difficult for the new teacher to understand the complicated lives of those parents, who perhaps had unsuccessful school histories themselves and avoid contact with the school rather than relive the bad experiences with their own children. It also is hard for new teachers to appreciate the demands on the single parent, usually a woman, who must work full time as well as do the cooking, home maintenance, and all the other parenting chores. For a parent to take time off from work for a meeting with a teacher, only to be told that

her child has a problem, is to be doubly punished. It becomes easy to find excuses for not going to the conference. Nevertheless, it leaves the teacher feeling isolated and alone with the problem student.

There are also a few parents the new teacher encounters whom they wish were no-shows. These are the parents who are condescending to teachers. Or they question in a critical and abrasive manner the teacher's methods and project a my-child-can-do-no-wrong attitude. While such parents are relatively scarce, tending to be concentrated in high socioeconomic communities, they can make for uncomfortable moments for the beginner.

However, most parents are eager to support the teacher's instructional program. While communications initially may be awkward when discussing a child who is causing problems, an unemotional and factual description of the situation usually leads to productive discussion. Parents and teachers should be natural allies, but even allies sometimes have trouble learning how to cooperate.

Administrators

Most new teachers begin their year with very good relationships with their principal. And well they should. After all, the principal has had a major say in the teacher being hired. The principal is the teacher's initial contact at the school, the one who explains the unique qualities of the school, describes the teaching assignment, and introduces the teacher to the rest of the school community. It is natural for the beginner to be appreciative. They feel honored and indebted to the person who has selected them from the many other candidates. And this contributes to their confusion when they have problems with their administrators.

The problems that beginners have with administrators can be grouped in three categories: the multiple roles played by the principal, the different perspectives of the principal and the new teacher, and the problem of authority.

Multiple Roles. The principal wears many hats as the official leader of a school, as the official conduit of policy decisions made by the superintendent or the board of education, and as the major dis-

penser of rewards and punishments. The principal is also the teacher's shield. When parents are angered by some action of a teacher, the principal absorbs the blows, tries to find out the truth, and seeks a solution.

The principal has many specialized roles, but the role that bears directly on the new teacher is that of judge. New teachers are reviewed by the same individual who earlier hired them. Their principal must decide some fine spring day whether their contract should be renewed. Realizing the multiple responsibilities of the administrator is one of the most important lessons for the first-year teacher.

> I really thought of him as my father. He was terrific to me, especially in the beginning. He went way out of his way to help me get settled in the community and to make me a part of the faculty. Probably because he reminded me so of my father, I started running to him every time the slightest thing went wrong. I had a lot to learn in those first months, and I guess I took up a lot of his time. He is very low key; and after each of the classroom observations he made, he told me that I needed to give more attention to math skills in my class. Well, I've always hated math and I guess I thought I would play to my strength, reading. Finally in late April, he called me into his office and told me he could not recommend that the district renew my contract. I was thunderstruck. He said he had to have someone strong in math and he could not in good conscience recommend me. After I got over the shock, he actually was quite helpful to me. He told me about a summer course that turned out to be terrific, and he helped me get another job. Although it was painful, the experience really made me grow up. And it taught me a lot about school administrators.

Different Perspectives. It is very difficult to capture accurately even the major events that occur in a classroom during an instructional event. Two individuals attempting to report on that event bring more than simply their eyes and ears, they often bring quite different sets of observational skills and their past experiences. And they bring their own set of values, their own personal views of what is good teaching and what is not. Given this situation, it is not unusual for the beginning teacher to have very different views of what is going on in the classroom than the supervising principal. Not only do the two, su-

pervised and supervisor, bring all their differences to the encounter, but one person, the supervised, is involved in the event as an actor.

> The conferences following my department chairman's observations were among the most frustrating parts of my year. We would sit down to talk about what happened, and it was like two people who had just seen different movies trying to talk together. I have come to see his point somewhat, but what he saw in my class was a lot of random, undirected activity. What I intended and what I saw was a free environment where students were encouraged and expected to work on their own. What he saw was students drifting and wasting time. What I saw was students searching, going at their natural step in the creative process. What he saw were several students who were, at the least, overly familiar with me and, at the most, totally undermining my authority as teacher. What I saw was an open, mature relationship that was important for what I was trying to accomplish. And this was only part of it. My good classes he thought were bombs; and what to me was a pancake to him was an educational feast. And what made it all the worse was that he was smart, and caring. It would have been much easier if he were some unfeeling idiot. Honestly, I came away from those sessions with my head swimming.

Authority. Some beginners have great difficulty dealing with an administrator's authority. They freeze up or become too compliant when confronted by authority. Others bristle at every request or suggestion by an administrator, believing that as a teacher they have autonomy to run their classes the way they see fit. The issue is complicated further by the fact that different administrators have very different styles of leadership and employ their authority in quite different ways. Similar to the problem of striking the right social distance with students, the new teacher frequently spends the year trying to understand these relationships with administrators.

Fellow Teachers

Many elementary and middle school faculties are close-knit groups. In high schools, the same phenomenon tends to exist on the departmental level. The individuals in these groups have a shared history.

They manned the picket lines together. Together they endured the endless innovations of the former superintendent. They have learned to live together. However, they have not yet learned to live with the first-year teacher.

The new teacher will change the status system and the reward structure of the school. Since in most school districts salary is determined by years of experience and academic degrees, status and psychological rewards do not come from the amount one earns. They come from one's reputation and the praise for one's talents or accomplishments. When the teacher who has for years played the piano for school assemblies and faculty parties hears that the new teacher is "fantastic on the piano," she probably does not greet this as good news. When the wrestling coach with three losing seasons in a row discovers that the new math teacher was an NCAA wrestling finalist last year, he may find it difficult to be gracious to this new math teacher.

But jealousies and petty concern for turf are not the only problems. A major problem is neglect. Often new teachers are warmly greeted by their new colleagues and then ignored or forgotten. The beginning of a school year is a hectic time even for veteran teachers; it is not always easy to attend to the new teacher. Sometimes faculties are embroiled in long-standing conflicts, and they have no collective energy to give to the new teacher. Sometimes faculty morale is so low that no one is willing to make the effort.

There also are social differences that separate new teachers from older teachers. This was seen rather dramatically during the late Sixties and early Seventies when the political and social divisions in the United States were regularly in the news. The older generation often felt assaulted and often disapproved of the political, sexual, and even educational ideas of the young. As in many homes during that period, teachers of different generations had great difficulties communicating.

Today new teachers are more politically conservative and regard the educational innovations of the recent past with deep suspicion. On the other hand, many veteran teachers look with considerable pride on their own efforts and the efforts of their fellow teachers over the

last 20 years to organize and build strong professional organizations. These sentiments often lead to conflict.

> Well, I made it official. I am now the designated outcast. All during the fall term, I simply listened to all the glorious stories about what the local teachers association had accomplished and how teachers had to look out for themselves because no one else would and on and on. I just kept my mouth shut. I joined because I had to, but stayed clear of the meetings and affairs. I know I have had a good year. Parents tell me. My principal has been very supportive. And I just know the kids have learned a lot. So when the personnel director called me in a few weeks ago and told me that because of the shrinkage of school-age students in the district and the planned school consolidation I might not have a job next year, I was stunned. When I asked, "Why me?" he acknowledged that everyone thought I was doing a fantastic job, but "Last hired, first fired" was the policy that the teacher association forced the district to adopt. When one union activist asked me a few days later in the faculty lounge why I hadn't attended any meetings, I really unloaded. As far as I'm concerned the union has done nothing for me but take my dues and helped to take my job. They don't stand for better education but better salaries and benefits for the old-timers. They have antagonized the community and poisoned relationships between teachers and administrators. I ended my little diatribe by announcing that the teachers union was simply a shield to protect the mediocre and the weak. He was so mad he could hardly talk. He just sputtered something and stalked out the door, followed by two others. Needless to say, I am not the most popular person in the faculty lounge these days.

While faculty colleagues are the backbone of psychological and professional support for many beginning teachers, for some they are not. For these, the faculty group is a closed society. It is a team that they have not yet made. They are left out of the Friday afternoon "culture club" gatherings. There does not seem to be room for them at the lunch table. No one ever explains the stories about what happened at the school in the past, stories that make up much of the conversation in the teachers' lounge. Most of these problems go away with time, but waiting to be invited to join the group just makes a difficult first year more difficult.

Instruction

Teachers are expected to know what to teach and how to teach it. When beginning teachers realize that they are having difficulties with instruction, they may experience a sense of deep, personal failure.

Preservice teachers receive a generalized professional program. The limitations of time and the need to prepare them to work in a variety of schools offering different curricula and serving all kinds of students force teacher trainers to focus on generic skills. It is left to the new teachers to apply what they have learned to particular classrooms.

Much of the craft of teaching can be learned only on the job. Transmitting ideas, even simple ideas, to 25 students is a task of staggering difficulty; and the new teacher must learn how to accomplish this task with a particular set of students. Often the teacher's first quiz or examination is a sobering experience.

> I was flying those first two weeks of school. I really think my feet never touched the ground. My students were so good and so interested. They seemed to like everything we were doing. When I asked if everyone understood, they would look around at one another; but no one ever asked a question or requested that I explain the concept again. I was quite conscious of being watched all the time, but I just took that as meaning that they never had had such a dynamite teacher. The only explosion, though, was my private little bubble bursting when I corrected my first set of test papers. Talk about a failure of communication!

Frequently new teachers discover that whole areas of knowledge and skill have been left out of their preparation. They are told that they will need to turn in lesson plans, and they have not the foggiest idea of how to develop plans. In student teaching they had been given plans and were expected to execute them, and that is what they expected to happen on their first teaching assignment. Or they were taught the principles of evaluation but did not learn how to write a test. These lacks are difficult for beginners to discover until they reveal themselves in a class. Then they can be the source of great discomfort. At best, new teachers learn to work around these deficiencies and put them on their list of things to learn.

New teachers also have difficulty finding appropriate material to teach. It is not uncommon for new secondary teachers who have majored in the subject field they are teaching to find that they do not know enough content. Little of what they learned in their major has a direct bearing on the curriculum they are supposed to be teaching. While all teachers are continually on the lookout for new and more meaningful curricular content, for the new teacher this is a critical issue.

> The last thing I expected to have trouble with was the curriculum. I really thought I knew my stuff when I began. I just never thought it would be an issue. None of the teachers I've known seemed to have this problem. None of the teachers I worked with during my teacher training seemed to have a problem, so I never considered it. It occurred to me a few nights before my first class that it was going to be a problem. I took a serious look at the curriculum guide and it dawned on me that this was just a general guide, saying what should be learned, but not telling me what to teach and how to teach it. There were no suggested learning activities or tests. And once I began teaching, I found my kids just consuming my lessons much faster than I could make them up or borrow them from the other teachers. And lots of times, what seemed like the best lessons blew up in my face. It would be too hard, too uninteresting, or too easy.

For whatever the reasons, the first year of teaching is beset with problems – some quite predictable, others unique to the personality and school situation of the beginning teacher. Acknowledgment of these potential problems is the first step in the new teacher's professional growth. And there are some things that the teacher can do in this initial year that will make it easier to solve these problems. There are also things that school systems and teacher training institutions can do. These are discussed in the next chapter.

Solving the Problem

The solutions to most of the problems experienced by beginning teachers are not enormously expensive, nor do they require herculean efforts. Certainly there are some new teachers who discover that they have made a disastrous career choice. These individuals should leave teaching for their own good and the good of their students. There also are many who make a quick adjustment to their teaching situation and need little assistance. But the others, the majority, make an imperfect adjustment and need assistance of some kind. There are three areas from which this assistance can come: the beginning teachers themselves, the school districts, and the teacher training institutions.

What Can the New Teacher Do?

Over several years the author has gathered advice from new and experienced teachers on how to survive the first year of teaching. Ten suggestions have emerged consistently.

1. *Before you begin the first year of teaching, decide to teach a second year.* The first year of teaching is a unique situation. There is so much that is new and so much to learn that it is foolish to make judgments based on only one year's experience. Do not make such an important life decision based on such inadequate data.

2. *If you are not organized, get organized.* One of the great surprises of the first year is the amount of paperwork and the number of details that are part of the teacher's life. Besides lesson plans and papers to collect, grade, record, and pass back, there are attendance records, locker assignments, information for emergencies (parents' home and work numbers and family doctors), student record cards, and what seems to the beginner to be a never-ending stream of bits of paper. Unless new teachers learn how to master these details and keep on top of them, they can be smothered.

3. *Do not look for love in the classroom.* Look for respect. Look for student achievement. But do not look for appreciation or affection. The new teacher who is looking for love is vulnerable and erodes the authority needed to lead a class. It is perfectly natural for the beginner to be uncertain and desire reassurance and appreciation. If it comes, fine. If it doesn't, wait.

4. *Love thy school secretary.* Few new teachers realize how central the school's secretary is to the smooth running of the organization. Beginning teachers often think of the secretary as "that person who keeps sending me notes requesting that I turn things in." Not realizing the need for this information and misjudging her power, new teachers often run afoul of the school secretary. This could be terminal. School secretaries are important members of the school community and should be recognized as such.

5. *Focus on learning.* With so many things to attend to, it is easy for the first-year teacher to lose focus on the essential task of student learning. The teacher must make a major effort to discover first what the students know and then to develop a program that builds on that knowledge. If this is done, other problems tend to be minor.

6. *Become a member of the faculty.* In a formal sense, just by being a teacher you are a member of the faculty. In fact, many new teachers isolate and occasionally alienate themselves from their colleagues. Make a conscious effort to get to know your colleagues. Use the faculty room. Eat lunch with them. Participate in some of the social events. Ask them for information and help. While there are exceptions, one's colleagues can provide a great source of satisfaction and professional learning.

7. *Pay your body its dues.* Stress is a fact of life in the first year. The demands of time and energy can lead to a loss of sleep, poor eating habits, and little real exercise. Together these can lead directly to health problems: lingering colds, anxiety, and depression. It is especially important that the new teacher get adequate rest, eat nutritious meals, and exercise regularly. These are not luxuries to be sacrificed to the demands of the job; they are necessities of the job.

8. *Come to terms with your authority.* Few young people have had much experience as an authority figure. They would much rather have things run smoothly without them having to tell students what to do or correct their behavior. But as teacher you have authority and you are in charge. Also, your colleagues, your administrators, your parents, and especially your students all want you to exercise your authority responsibly. The alternative is failure and chaos.

9. *Do not get married the week before school starts.* One of the strange mating rites of young American teachers is the tendency to get married just before beginning their first teaching experience, thereby taking on two of life's greatest challenges at the same time. Trying to learn to live well with another person and negotiate a new career is a double burden. Those brave souls who do this should be well aware of the extra stresses and strains they are putting on themselves, and of the special supports they may need.

10. *Find a mentor.* Find an experienced, older teacher who is willing to act as a guide and confidant through the first year. Senior teachers who have fully mastered their own classrooms often are looking for challenges. Helping new teachers adjust can be a very satisfying challenge. While the choice of a mentor is usually an informal choice, it should be done with great care. The only thing worse than having no mentor is having a poor one.

What Can the School District Do?

Most schools have some sort of inservice program for their teachers. But few programs deal directly with the issues and problems experienced by first-year teachers. Instead of workshops on mastery learning or interpreting standardized tests, the school district should

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have special programs for their inexperienced staff, programs that provide them with practical answers to immediate problems. Even such a minimal effort as a panel of the district's most effective teachers responding to the new teachers' problems is better than mandating that all new teachers participate in the inservice activities that are designed for experienced teachers.

These beginning teacher inservice programs should be on-going throughout the school year. For example, new teachers could be brought together for a training session twice a month, in which a respected, experienced teacher might work on the stated needs of the beginners. The sessions should be no longer than an hour and a half, and the atmosphere should be relaxed. As special events come up, like Parents' Night or the first marking period, teachers or administrators with special skill or knowledge in these areas should be invited to give informal presentations and answer questions.

These training sessions should become support groups for beginning teachers. Not only should they provide beginners with nuts-and-bolts ideas for coping with their problems, but they should serve a social and psychological function as well. They should help the struggling new teachers to realize that they are not the only ones who are discouraged, have discipline problems, or are totally confused by the attendance records they are supposed to be keeping. The group becomes a place where beginning teachers not only can get answers but also unbend and unburden themselves. The group itself is a source of support for the beginner.

Many school districts currently are experimenting with mentoring programs. While the specifics vary, the core idea is to provide special incentives for successful experienced teachers judged to be good role models, who are willing to be coaches or guides for beginners. Sometimes these mentors are recently retired teachers who want to share their successful teaching experience. New York City has conducted a highly successful pilot project in which recently retired teachers each worked with eight new teachers and received about half their former salary for their work. The program has been so successful that it is currently being considered for statewide adoption.

Mentoring programs do not always involve retired teachers or those near retirement. In many places the mentors are persons much closer to the beginning teacher's age and who have a great empathy for the difficult world of the new teacher. Wisconsin recently has sponsored such mentor programs on an experimental basis. The mentors are selected by their fellow teachers and administrators on the basis of their skills and nurturing qualities. In addition to these examples, a number of states have passed or are considering legislation to provide mentoring and other support services for new teachers. While the mentoring programs differ on specifics, the purpose is the same: to provide the new teacher with a helper-friend who is not part of the school administration and who has the time and personal qualities to be of assistance.

While there is much that the school district administration can do to focus attention and resources on the needs of beginners, the teachers in the district also can do much to help. Helping younger colleagues acquire mastery is a worthy goal of any professional association dedicated to improving the teaching profession. Indeed, it is difficult to see how this problem can be solved unless a significant number of teachers make it a professional priority.

What Can Teacher Education Institutions Do?

Universities and colleges involved in teacher education traditionally have provided preservice programs for individuals seeking certification and entry-level training and graduate or inservice programs for teachers after they begin practice. Only rarely do teacher education institutions address the unique problems of the beginning teacher. It is not uncommon for a new teacher, who cannot maintain any semblance of discipline in the classroom, to be taking a graduate course on Research Methodology in Education or Principles of Curriculum Design.

Recent research on the first year of teaching and on the stages of a teaching career has led to a reformulation of teacher education programs into three categories: preservice, induction, and inservice (see fastback 214 *Teacher Career Stages: Implications for Staff Develop-*

ment). In response, teacher training institutions are beginning to distinguish between what they can do for new teachers and what they can do for those who have moved past the special problems of beginners. This is a major step. There is also a movement in preservice programs to mitigate the severe problems of new teachers.

In the last 15 years an increasing number of institutions, often prodded by state departments of education and accreditation organizations, have required undergraduates to spend substantial time observing and working in schools. Many programs require three or four distinct field experiences. This exposure to the real world of teaching has given future teachers first-hand experience for preparing themselves for the demands of the role. Many of their romantic notions of children and how they learn are revised during these field experiences.

While this is an important step, it is not enough. Even though preservice students are placed with veteran teachers selected because they are models of good practice, the experience still is sheltered and somewhat remote from the problems faced by beginners. To overcome this, teacher educators need to give more attention to the entry problems of beginning teachers. There are several autobiographical accounts written by new teachers that can be used in education courses. Panel discussions by recent graduates, toiling in their early years, can be arranged. Students can be given assignments to interview both seasoned and new teachers about their initial teaching experiences. These activities can direct preservice students to the kinds of problems they are likely to experience.

Induction-oriented graduate courses also can help new teachers. Such courses can focus on the research about the first year; they can use the biographical accounts of first-year teachers; they can be problem-solving sessions drawn from the immediate problems reported by class members.

Ideally, university faculty should follow their new teacher graduates into the field and help them with the entry-level problems of beginning teachers. While this is not always practical in a mobile society such as ours, university personnel in several parts of the country are doing just this. In addition, several universities are disseminating in-

formation and holding professional meetings to make supervisors and administrators more aware of the often troubled world of the beginning teacher.

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Conclusion

We must take every possible step to ensure that new teachers are successful right from the beginning of their careers. To cope is not enough. Poor attitudes and questionable practices acquired during the first years are habits that are difficult to break. To discourage potentially gifted teachers because they are unprepared and unsupported during their initial year is a grave loss to our schools. British anthropologist Ashley Montague wrote in *The Cultured Man*, "The deepest personal sorrow suffered by human beings consists of the difference of what one was capable of becoming and what one has, in fact, become." The sorrow is particularly bitter when there is so much we can do to help new teachers be what they can and should be.

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